MMR_0721 Paul Buhrke

It all started with my Lionel train set and layout way back in about 1955 or 56. I do have a picture of me dressed up, of course, working with the trains. The seeds were sown early as most of us who were "seeded."

Over the years and several moves later, the Lionel layout was repurposed as a HO scale layout. That was my first venture into scale model railroading. I had received a Tyco D&RGW passenger train. You remember the F9A, combine, coach and observation car right? Yes, I still remember all those pitfalls; brass sectional track, DC wiring, horn hook couplers, egad.

Well, that morphed into not too much as time, energy and money was scarce for me at those ages. When I went to College, I started to awaken my miserable skills, HOn3 and HO standard gauge piqued my interests. Neither were honed that well as again time and money were tight.

It wasn't until I moved to an apartment and joined a club in the area that things began to improve skill wise. I did have quite a collection of DL&W equipment as that was my scope of interest for that period.

I also had a Pocono that as my first attempt at bashing brass, received all sorts of details and parts. I used a picture for the blueprints and when I was finished, I was happy. I painted several pieces of AHM passenger cars in Gray and Maroon as well lettering and swapping the horn hooks for Kadee couplers and scale wheels. I was starting to get a roll.

Slowly moving forward, I bought a house and acquired a roommate. We were club members, single AND railfans so why not have the best of all three worlds? Somehow, we managed to get bitten by the Sn3 bug. Gosh those Tomalco kits were nice to build.

I was honing my skills and building those kits in threes no less. And for the grand prize, I acquired three PFM Sn3 C-16s. Those were changed to match somewhat to the prototype.

Unfortunately, those days slowly faded as moving, marriage and being a lone ranger took their toll on the Sn3. HO was the default way to model for a long time now.

A move to New York state led to my first serious HO scale layout in the basement. This lasted for several years until I found On2. Oh oh; this was trouble! Wood kits that one could see details with hand laid track. I was hooked and the saga began as the layout was repurposed into a double deck layout in On2.

Lots of equipment was built from Cranberry Junction SR&RL kits and I even had two articles published in the On2 Quarterly about my passenger cars. Brass locomotives were acquired and my crowning achievement was the conversion of a 2-6-2 #16 to #15. Everything was removed from the boiler including the boiler bands and re-worked the shell to model #15.

Well, all good things must come to an end and so did my marriage. The result was the abandonment of the layout.

My final years, before retirement, was beginning the HO layout that we all dream about. In fact, I was almost finished collecting all of the equipment and motive power needed. Then reality set in with that dreaded time/space equation.

There would not be either enough time, space or most importantly money to do what I wanted. This is where I reverted to my roots and went with HOn3. You know I have always loved to build wood kits; something about wood looking like wood, I guess.

This is where I came of age (pun intended) retirement. The room of where to put my layout was an easy decision. Now ten years in and the layout is about 75% finished.

Along with building the layout, I joined the NMRA in the Arizona Division. I read an article in the NMRA magazine that said *"You built a layout didn't you? Why not get your MMR?"*

Well I did and with some gentle prodding, thanks Bruce! I achieved MMR #721. It was not as difficult as I had thought fulfilling the requirements. However, being a MMR, my skill set and attention to details have gone quite high on the scale. Then again, if I can become a MMR so can you. Believe me when I say that.

Now for my closing paragraphs. I bet you thought you that I would never get there. I had the usual mish-mash of jobs before the important date of August 11, 1980. That was my seniority date when I hired out on Seaboard Coast Line Railroad as a Trainman. Two years later I was promoted to Conductor and was working in the states of VA, NC and SC.

AMTRAK called me to go to work in 1989 so off I went. That led me from the south to New York state where I worked from Albany to Montreal, New York City, Cleveland and Niagara Falls.

I will not dredge things up, but California called and that was my last posting. Working from Oakland CA to Reno NV daily. Yes, that means Donner Summit was crossed every day I worked. That alone was a real treat and heck just plain awesome!

Eventually though, all train trips must come to an end and so did mine. It was time to step off and hang up the uniform. Tucson, Arizona called and it was time to punch my own ticket.

Thank you!

Paul D. Buhrke, 721